

February 9, 2009 Testimony

Connecticut Senate Transportation Committee Subject Matter Hearing

Brian Zimmer, President, Coalition for a Secure Driver's License

Hello. My name is Brian Zimmer and I am the President of the Coalition for a Secure Driver's License (CSDL).

We are a non-partisan 501 (c)(3), crime prevention, educational, public charity incorporated in Washington, D.C. . We have approximately 80 members residing in Connecticut. Our funding comes from donors in all 50 states.

CSDL's mission is to prepare and distribute educational materials about the national security and public safety benefits of improving the security of driver's license issuance.

Since 1913 when New Jersey issued the first drivers' licenses, the use of drivers' licenses has moved beyond simply demonstrating that a person has passed a driving exam and is eligible to drive. State and federal laws have expanded the driver's license's value to include a whole host of identification purposes. Today, it is the preferred identification document for business and for law enforcement. The driver's license is the ID card of choice for people applying for a U.S. Passport, a replacement Social Security Card, or to board a domestic airplane flight.

In fact, we use our driver's license as an ID card many times a year, and use it as evidence to drive only when renting a car or for that occasional police traffic stop.

And it is because it is accepted so readily as proof of identity at the grocery store, at the bank, at the liquor store, that foreign visitors seek to obtain it.

Connecticut has rules in place at the DMV that prevent most illegal aliens from obtaining driver's licenses or state issued ID cards. However, Connecticut currently issues 6 year term licenses to foreign visitors who have only two year visas. That's because state law does not authorize the DMV to issue temporary licenses that expire concurrent with the date that the visa expires.

It would be nice, and probably politically correct to believe foreign visitors who overstay their visas are all wonderful people, But that would be only wishful thinking.

This was a lesson that came after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Eighteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers carried some form of government-issued identification, mostly state driver's licenses, many of which were obtained through identity fraud. The National

Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (commonly referred to as the "9/11 Commission"), stated that,

"Secure identification should begin in the United States. The federal government should set standards for the issuance of birth certificates and sources of identification, *such as drivers' licenses*. Fraud in identification documents is no longer just a problem of theft. At many entry points to vulnerable facilities, including gates for boarding aircraft, sources of identification are the last opportunity to ensure that people are who they say they are and to check whether they are terrorists."

It is of paramount importance to the economic and national security of the United States that a driver's license accurately conveys the identity of the individual presenting it.

Here are multiple copies of information brochures produce by my organization that a more detailed explanation of the risks and alternative solutions to address driving by foreign visitors.

Thank You.